DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 083 548 CS 000 784

AUTHOR Ridenour, Delores
TITLE Procedures and Structure for Individualizing a Reading and Study Skill Program.
PUB DATE 31 Oct 72
NOTE 11p.; Paper presented at a meeting of the Ohio College Council of the International Reading Assn., Oct. 31, 1972

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS College Students; *Individualized Instruction; Program Descriptions; Reading; *Reading Diagnosis; *Reading Improvement; *Reading Programs; Reading Skills; *Study Skills

ABSTRACT

This paper is an account of procedures followed when the traditional classroom of a college reading and study skill program was changed to a fully individualized structure. A folder of information to be used by each pupil consisted of personal information graphs for plotting rate and comprehension scores, answer sheets, a reading skill and materials reference sheet, and a contract to be signed by each student. The counselor's record system consisted of recording the conferences, recommendations, and personal assessment of needs, materials, and procedures being prescribed. Test scores as well as an informal personal inventory were used for diagnostic purposes. Based on the diagnostic information, the counselors prescribed the areas and materials in which the student should begin working. The prescription was given to each student individually at a conference held during class time. A supplemental evaluation of the program after one year of operation resulted in eliminating the pupil contract, the introduction of mini-sessions for follow-up and extensions of lessons, greater reliance on informal inventories and individual conferences than on testing, and utilization of textbooks used by the students in other courses. (WR)

FILMED FROM BEST AVAILABLE COPY

ED 083548

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

"Procedures and Structure for Individualizing a Reading and Study Skill Program"

October 31, 1972

by

Mrs. Delores A. Ridenour

University of Cincinnati

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Mrs. Delores A. Ridenour
TO ERIC AND ORGANIZATIONS OPERATING UNDER AGREEMENTS WITH THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION. FURTHER REPRODUCTION OUTSIDE THE ERIC SYSTEM REQUIRES PERMISSION OF THE COPYRIGHT OWNER."

CS 000 784

One need not search too long or too far to find articles enumerating the value of individualized reading/study skills programs. These articles are replete with lists of materials used and statistics on student improvement as indicated by grade point averages and/or pre-and post-test scores. Lacking in this literature is a detailed account of just what procedures must be followed when an established program makes a complete changeover from the traditional classroom structure to a fully individualized program. This paper is an account of the procedures followed when one program made such a change and is presented in the hope that it may make things easier for others who desire to institute such a program.

Before deciding that alterations in program procedure are needed, it is necessary to define the goals and objectives of the program and evaluate how well these objectives are being met. If the objectives are not being met, the next step is to determine what factor or factors are frustrating these goals.

The opportune time for such an assessment in our program came with the appointment of a new director. The results clearly indicated that the program was not drawing or adequately serving students who had serious academic problems due to the lack of reading and study skills. The role of our urban university was changing and the needs of the students were so varied that revisions in our program were mandatory. One of the areas demanding immediate action was that of program structure.

To more fully understand the nature of the transition that occured it is necessary to acquaint you with our original framework. Although the program is service centered, it is housed under the College of Education. The course is a non-credit course, but students must register for it as they would any other.

Anywhere from seven to eight sections of the course were offered with five, fifty minute sections on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday and three, seventh-five minute periods on Tuesday and Thursday. (Table 1)

Mon. - Wed. - Fri.	Tues. - Thurs.
8:00 - 8:50	8:00 - 9:15
9:00 - 9:50	9:30 - 10:45
10:00 - 10:15	11:00 - 12:15
11:00 - 11:15	
1:00 - 1:15	

The program personnel consisted of the director who taught two or three sections of the course, a full-time instructor who taught four sections, and two graduate assistants who taught one section each along with supervising the lab in the afternoons. There was a full-time secretary and a student assistant who also helped with the office work.

The physical accommodations, other than office space, consisted of a classroom with capacity for twenty-four (we sometimes had more) and a lab which housed ten junior controlled readers and facilities for listening to tapes. The lab was used mainly for those who wanted to obtain extra practice or to make up work. It was also used for those students who were at either extreme of the continuum related to rate. They could view the same controlled reader film being viewed in the class at a rate comensurate with their ability.

Generally speaking, the course procedure was as follows: the first week was devoted to the administration of the Trigg test and the Brown Holtzman Study Habits Inventory. The following class sessions were devoted to the entire class viewing a controlled reader film followed by exercises from various materials relating to specific reading skills which were changed each week. There were weekly drills with machines such as the tachistoscope and reading accelerators. Periodically there were lectures on various study skills. Once or twice each quarter the instructor would conduct interviews with each student outside of

regular classtime to check on the progress being made, or lack thereof, as well as giving additional advice concerning study habits. A post-test was administered during the final week of the quarter and students were given report sheets containing pre- and post-test scores.

We felt that such procedures no longer met the needs of our students and that an individualized approach was required. It became my responsibility to design and implement such a program.

One of the first things I did was to visit the director of our counseling center. I wanted to know how they kept track of their large clientel and what kinds of records they found helpful in maintaining a smooth running program. Although there are more differences than similarities between the two programs, the information gleaned from them gave me some needed insight into what we would require.

It was important to decide upon the kind of records that would be needed by the students, the instructors, and the office to best expedite the proposed structure.

Each student is provided with a folder that is as simple as possible because complicated record keeping can and does discourage students. Each folder contains the following items:

1. a personal information sheet to be used by the counselor
2. a calendar for noting materials with which they work
3. two graphs, one for plotting rate and comprehension scores of timed reading and one for controlled reader films
4. an answer sheet designed for use with any of the reading materials
5. an answer sheet designed for use with the controlled reader
6. a reading skill and materials reference sheet (Table 2) which enables the student to seek out additional materials in given areas without having to consult with the instructor. This gives the student the freedom to accept or reject certain materials based on their own needs and personal preferences.
7. a contract to be signed by each student.

Table 2:

	Jacobus	Joffe	McGraw-Hill	Spargo (Selections from the Black)
Rate:				
Acceleration	P	P	IP	P
Flexibility			IP	
Skimming			IP	
Comprehension:				
Main Idea	P	IP	IP	P
Details	P	IP	IP	P

etc. I-indicates instructional material
P-indicates practice exercises

Since work for each student is prescribed individually, the instructor needed a record of the students' test scores, personal assessments of needs and a record of the materials and procedures being prescribed. Each teacher is provided with a large filing box and 5x8 inch cards. One card is filled out with the aforementioned information for each student, and each time a conference is held with the student a note is made of it on the card with a brief notation of what transpired during the conference, and the recommendations that are made.

Each counselor also keeps what we refer to as contact sheet. Down the left hand side of this sheet is listed all the counselor's students and across the top are the dates for each week in the quarter, i.e., week of October 9, etc. The letter "B" is used to indicate the initial or beginning conference, check marks show subsequent conferences and "T" indicates the student's termination in the program. This sheet is totaled and handed to the secretary at the end of each week. She in turn records all the totals and returns the contact sheet to the counselors. This enables us to have a clearer picture of the number of students being serviced and the number of counseling sessions being held with each student.

An office card was designed which contained pertinant information about each student. In addition to name, classification, rank, college, and test scores we feel it important for recruitment purposes to know the referral source. All of this data has potential value for evaluating the center's population.

In determining the procedural changes that would be made an evaluation was made of each phase of the procedure that had been followed. The first phase that evaluated was the testing provedures.

To bring the testing in line with our philosophy of testing we administered the test the second class period instead of the first, omitted post-testing and changed from the Trigg to the Nelson-Denny. We feel that thrusting a test upon the students the first class period tends to discourage those most in need of help. We now use the first class period to describe the course and solicit information that will be of use to us in the future. Without an adequate first session explanation of the fact that the test is to be used merely as a guide, those who performed poorly had their poor self-images reinforced. Letting the students know that there will be no post-testing helps instill the idea that they are not in the course just to develop skills to show improvement on a test at the end of the quarter. The improvements they make in rate and comprehension will be evident from the records they keep of the work they do throughout the quarter. Many of the reasons why students enroll in such a course are not even measured on such a test. Therefore, we not only use the test scores for diagnostic purposes but during the first class period we ask the students to indicate on a list of reading and study skills those that are major or minor factors in their reading and study problems. This informal personal survey has proven effective and less time consuming than the Brown Holtzman.

It has also been my experience that many students who have shown marked improvement in their studies as a result of the techniques they learned in the class, fail to show the same degree of improvement on the post-test. This lessens the effects of the improvements they had made which in turn, discourages them from continuing with the course another quarter (which they may do) or pursuing those practices that had begun to help them.

The reasons for changing from the Trigg to the Nelson-Denny were several. It can be administered in one fifty minute class period and it is easier and less time consuming to score. Whereas the Trigg only provides norms for college freshmen, the Nelson-Denny provides norms for all four classifications of college students.

With all this diagnostic information at hand the counselor is then ready to prescribe the areas and materials in which the student should begin working. To help the counselor in assigning materials at the beginning of the quarter, each counselor is given what we call a prescription sheet. On this sheet is a list of a variety of materials under such catagories as (1) Setting Purposes for Reading, (2) Rate and General Comprehension subdivided into Controlled Reader and Books for Timed and/or Pacer Reading, and (3) Specific Comprehension Skills. Next to each item is listed a range of percentile ranks. The counselor can then look at the student's total score and immediately find the materials within each grouping which would be the most suitable for that student. The prescriptions are by no means limited to these areas. Student needs dictate additional or alternative recommendations.

The prescription is given to each student individually at a conference held during class time. Prior to giving out the prescriptions all the students are told that the prescriptions are only suggestions and that they may feel free to change whenever they feel the material is unsuitable. We find that they

are quite candid about the materials and they sometimes wish to change not because of the ease or difficulty of the material but because they just do not like it. We also explain in advance, to the entire class the areas that will be considered in the prescriptions, the location of the materials, and procedures for utilizing the various types of materials.

Following this initial conference the counselor has a conference with each student every week or two to provide opportunity for ongoing diagnosis. This procedure allows the counselor and student to decide whether to continue with the prescribed work, or make some changes or additions if new needs develop. The need for a student to work on skills in which he is already proficient is eliminated, as is the frustration of students who are not yet ready to move on to another area at a given time but might feel that something is wrong with them if they are not ready when others are.

When we first made the change, we scheduled one study skill lecture with the entire class each week. We have since changed so that once a week we have mini-study skill sessions, meeting only with those students who have indicated a need for and interest in the subject to be discussed. At the beginning of the week the counselor announces to the students the subject to be discussed in the study skill session, the day it will be held, and materials that can be read ahead of time. By having the students read ahead on the topic for discussion the sessions become more of a discussion than a lecture. We have found that the students are more willing to ask questions and participate in the discussions in the informal small group setting. The close contact that is permitted through the conferences and small group discussions is an important factor in keeping those students most deficient in reading skills from dropping the course. We also have tutors who can work individually with those students who need the continual one-to-one relationship as well as immediate help and feedback. This enables the instructor to circulate among the other students to make suggestions and answer questions.

We have found that the two, seventy-five minute sections on Tuesdays and Thursdays do not offer the same consistent practice as do the sessions that meet fifty minutes three times a week. We tried an experiment that has worked unusually well. We explain the benefits of the more frequent sessions to our Tuesday, Thursday people and suggest that if their schedule will permit the rearrangement they should work only fifty minutes on Tuesday and Thursday and put in an additional fifty minutes some other time during the week. The fact that all the students sign contracts agreeing to work the equivilant of three fifty minute periods a week makes them feel more obligated to keep their word, and they do. Students need not have their reading counselor present to pursue their work, they only need to come to the room, get their folder, select their materials and begin working.

One very significant change we were able to make this year was facilitated by acquiring the use of an adjacent classroom and the services of two more full-time instructors. We increased the class limit to forty and assigned two or three instructors (this includes graduate assistants) to each period. As a result no one has more than thirteen to twenty students per class, enabling more students to be serviced without overloading any one instructor. The addition of the two instructors is a definite asset since the demands of the college have cut one instructors full-time work in the center to half-time (two courses) and the director responsibilities have reduced his classes in the center to one.

Our program has undergone major changes that have required much work, but we feel that the effort has been worthwhile. But, we have not stopped changing. Even now, further changes are being contemplated. We will continue to make changes which enable us to more effectively help our students.

One Year Later

The first part of this paper, presented in October of 1972, concluded with the statement that our program was still in the process of change and would continue to do so. It is now October 1973 and I wish to report on some changes that have occurred.

The course can now be taken for one hour of credit. One of the two year colleges affiliated with the university has designed a four hour communications skill course with our course as a co-requisite, satisifying one of the four hours credit: also, we have eliminated the contract we were using to help students make a committment to the course. The fact that credit is received creates a different attitude on the part of the students.

Testing procedures have undergone several changes over the past year. We eliminated testing two of the three quarters last year. We found that informal inventories and individual conferences gave us much more diagnostic information than did the tests. We were better able to pinpoint various skills that were not identifiable with an overall comprehension score. This year, we decided to try the new Iowa Silent Reading Test. The major reason for this is that some of the federally funded programs working with us have to have test scores as evidence of the progress the students are making. This test has many advantages over any of the others we have examined, such as more relevant material in the reading passages and better questions. To make the test scores more meaningful I went through all the questions in the comprehension section and catagorized them accordi[illegible] to type, main idea, inference, etc. Then, rather than recording stanines, et[illegible], I recorded how many of each type of question was missed by each person. This was done on one sheet of paper so that a class profile was evident as well as individual profiles. This information was used in the initial conference with each student. We administered only the comprehension section of the test, but other relevant sections will be administered by the reading counselors as they feel the need for further diagnostic information.

Class sessions are conducted somewhat differently. The once a week sessions did not seem to be sufficient for the students so the first ten to fifteen minutes of each session are spent with a talk on a subject appropriate for that particular group. This regular contact with the entire group at the beginning of the hour seems to be a positive reinforcement. This could deal with reading as well as techniques for study. Mini-sessions are used for follow-up and extensions of these lectures for small groups of students needing more guidance in that particular area. Mini-lectures are also used with small groups that are grouped according to needs and/or interests. To help identify students that have the same or similar classes the students are asked to write their schedules on the back of the 5 x 8 card the instructor keeps for noting the students' concerns and materials that have been recommended. The counselor can then plan ahead for some group sessions.

There has been greater utilization of the text books used by the students in their other courses. After a discussion of underlining they read from one of their assignments and underline. The reading counselor can check and give

immediate feedback on their work. Their notebooks, with notes taken at lectures, are brought in and discussed with the counselor. The students are responding positively to this procedure because they can see the direct relationship to the work they are doing in their other classes.

My closing remarks are similar to those used in my original paper; we are in the process of making some other changes and we will continue to do so. The most important key to individualizing such a program is flexibility. Students change, their needs vary and if the program is to remain individualized it must be sensitive to these changes and adjust accordingly.

END

DEPT.OF HEALTH
EDUCATION AND
WELFARE
U.S. OFFICE OF
EDUCATION
ERIC
DATE FILMED

2 26 74